

The Status Report



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Post- Election Updates: A Letter from the Chair

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As election season draws to a close, the MCSW reflects on female representation in elected office. In Massachusetts, the number of female representatives in both houses will be at its lowest point since 1998. With the decrease of female representatives, the percentage of women serving in the next session will only be 24%, down from 25.5% this past year. However, even with the decrease in women overall, a few notable gains were made. The Massachusetts Legislature saw the addition of Representative Katherine Clark (D) in the Senate as well as newcomer Eileen Donoghue (D). Massachusetts will see its first female state auditor, Suzanne Bump (D), joining the company of Attorney General Martha Coakley (D), also re-elected, to state office. Congresswoman Nikki Tsongas (D) also won her re-election bid for the House of Representatives.

Nationally, though there will not be an increase in women serving in Congress, a few key victories were won by women. The first woman of color, Terri Sewell (D-AL), was elected to represent Alabama in the House of Representatives. Kelly Ayotte (R-NH) will be the first woman to represent New Hampshire in the Senate. Additionally, there will be three new female Republican governors next year, two of whom are women of color. Nikki Haley (R-SC) will be the first female governor of her state and the second Indian-American governor in the nation. Susana Martinez (R-NM) will be the first Latina governor of New Mexico. Both governor-elects join Jan Brewer (R-AZ) in her re-election win and Mary Fallin (R-OK) in her victory for Oklahoma's open gubernatorial seat.

In spite of these firsts, women overall are not making gains in elected representation. Certainly, there can be no question that more needs to be done to encourage women to consider a run for elected office. The Commission looks forward to continuing our partnerships with organizations committed to increasing women's involvement in appointed and elected office.

Linda Cavaoli
Chair

The Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women

Call for 2011 Unsung Heroine Sponsors and Nominations

The MCSW has begun planning for its eighth annual Unsung Heroines of Massachusetts event, which seeks to honor previously unrecognized women for their valiant efforts towards social progress and tangible change within their communities. Nomination forms for outstanding local residents who have positively impacted the lives of the women, children, and families in their communities may be found on the MCSW website.

Additionally, the MCSW has begun sponsorship outreach in preparation for the ceremony. The MCSW is currently seeking private sponsors for the Unsung Heroine initiative. Interested sponsors can find the application on our website. For any further inquiries or information, please email or phone the MCSW directly.

MCSW to Improve MassWIN

When the Commission was established twelve years ago, one of the charges set forth in the enabling legislation was to “serve as a clearinghouse for information on issues pertaining to women”. To that end, MCSW established in 2006 and has since hosted an online searchable database called the Massachusetts Women’s Information Network (originally known as the Massachusetts Women’s Resource and Referral Network). MassWIN can be found at www.mcswnetwork.com.

MCSW is currently in the process of making improvements to MassWIN, including adding new providers. If you know of an organization that serves women and girls in Massachusetts that you cannot find on the database, please let us know by either using the “Register a Provider” link if you represent the organization, or contacting the MCSW office if you do not. We are excited about making this already valuable resource for Massachusetts women and girls even more user-friendly and complete.

Fall River Public Hearing Today

As many MCSW supporters may already be aware, the MCSW and the Bristol County Commission on the Status of Women will be hosting a joint public hearing in Fall River on Wednesday, November 17 at 7pm. The hearing will be held at the Family Services Association, located at 101 Rock St., Fall River.

The hearing will also include a short presentation for women regarding potential pay increases, titled “Tips for Negotiating Your Salary.” The MCSW strongly encourages local individuals, families, and organizations to attend the hearing and to testify about local matters affecting the status of women in the Fall River community.

MCSW Joins MassGAP Effort

The MCSW has recently teamed up with MassGAP, the Massachusetts Government Appointments Project, as a participating organization. The MCSW will aid in MassGAP’s efforts to increase the number of female appointees to senior-level cabinet positions, agency heads, and other prominent governmental positions within the Commonwealth.

Founded in 2002, MassGAP is a collaborative effort, consisting of over 25 bi-partisan women’s organizations and led by the Massachusetts Women’s Political Caucus. MassGAP seeks to both eliminate any obstacles that currently prevent women from holding high-ranking positions in the Commonwealth, and to ensure a continued growth of female appointments in Massachusetts. Presently, although approximately 52% of Massachusetts’ population is female, only 31% of individuals appointed to top level positions within the state government are women.

The MCSW looks forward to working with MassGAP in the coming months to help promote gender equality and female counsel in Massachusetts. Further updates will be provided as MassGAP and its partner organizations coordinate their efforts throughout the year.

Jane Doe Event Honors Congressman Delahunt

On December 3, Jane Doe, Inc. will hold its annual meeting and Fundraising Reception, and also honor Congressman Bill Delahunt, representing the 10th district, for his lifelong commitment to ending sexual and domestic violence. Prior to his election in 1997, Delahunt served as District Attorney of Norfolk County, where he developed the first prosecutorial unit focused on domestic violence in the country. Congressman Delahunt is currently a sponsor of the International Violence Against Women Act of 2010, and has cosponsored the Girls Protection Act of 2010, the Justice for Survivors of Sexual Assault Act of 2009, and the International Protecting Girls by Prevention of Marriage Act of 2009.

Jane Doe, Inc. is a statewide coalition dedicated to preventing and abolishing domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. The organization promotes justice, safety, and healing for survivors. The event honoring Congressman Bill Delahunt will be held at the Fairmont Copley Plaza on December 3, 2010 from 5:30-7:30 pm. For more information, contact Conventures, Inc. at 617-204-4222 or email janedoe@conventures.com.